



Suite Provençale for Ocarina, Triangle, and PowerPoint

Citation

Greene, Virginie. 2011. "Suite Provençale for Ocarina, Triangle and PowerPoint." Glossator 4: 139-170.

Permanent link

<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:34797392>

Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Open Access Policy Articles, as set forth at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#OAP>

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

SUITE PROVENÇALE
FOR OCARINA, TRIANGLE, AND POWERPOINT

Virginie Greene

NB: This essay is also available in its original format
<<http://www.archive.org/details/SuiteProvenaleForOcarinaTriangleAndPowerpoint>>

PowerPoint does not have a good reputation with humanists. They do not view it as a medium for thoughtful scholarship, astute criticism, or creative commentary. Can you imagine Walter Benjamin or Jacques Derrida presenting their thoughts as a PowerPoint slide show? The name lends itself to jokes (“Powerless and Pointless” among others). It evokes a brand of battery or a drilling tool rather than a frame for dreams or a virtual path for exploration, investigation, musing, and doodling. The fact that it is too often used to invest a weak argumentation based on spurious facts with an air of non-nonsense authority and straightforward honesty contributes to its low popularity in some academic and artistic circles. PowerPoint sounds vulgar and threatening with its two capital Ps erected like flagpoles indicating with no uncertainty where the wind is blowing from: hightech, and where it is blowing to: highertech. Powerpoint brings to mind at once

- bullets
 - sub bullets
 - sub sub bullets
 - sub sub sub bullets
 - » sub sub sub sub bullets
 - sub sub sub sub sub bullets
 - sub sub sub sub sub bullets
 - » sub sub sub sub bullets
 - sub sub sub bullets
 - sub sub bullets
 - sub bullets
- bullets

- corporatism
- monologism
- rigidity
- hierarchy
- homogenization
- quantification
- simplification
- electronics
- bad vibes
- lack of aura

(and, worse of all)

- [illegible]

But

This is due to a lack of imagination - A hidden art of Powerpoint waits to be discovered.

Powerpoint

Noodle point

Point of view

Punchum

Aren't you

a powerpoint

is like making a

collage of words, fonts,

signs, icons, images,

pictures, maps.

Instead of organizing

one's thoughts in

sentences, paragraphs or

pages ~~that~~ one would organ-

ize in slides - or

pictures.

Doodles can only be done by hand and in a dreamy mood.

But they can be recorded in electronic form.

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Powerpoint

Platitudes and spurious
handwritten in

arguments may be
small notebooks.

Platitudes and spurious arguments may be
handwritten in small notebooks.

As pen and less writing is done by hand, the manuscript
becomes more and more an object of fetishism.
It has been for a long time

Hand

Platitudes and spurious arguments may be
handwritten in small notebooks.

As pen and less writing is done by hand, the manuscript
becomes more and more an object of fetishism.
It has been too cherished here.

Hand

Ancient manuscripts or rare manuscripts by Famous People
are relics of bodies and minds out of our reach. Present
manuscripts by non famous people generally interest
only their author or, after his or her death, bereaved
relatives and friends - so we hope. In all cases, manus-
cripts offer the trace of a touch and display the
disjunction between an "I", who once wrote this
and an "I", who now read this."

OK! Stop pretending you are Anne Frank and tell us seriously, without doodling around, what you plan to add to the corpus of learned comments on old provençal poetry (given that you are neither an expert in codicology nor in old provençal poetry).

Herein should appear a grand declaration of purpose and intention, but I have a hunch my preliminaries have been circuitous enough to tire most of my audience, so I replace the declaration by a short interlude for ocarina and triangle, before moving to the fetish, I mean the manuscript.





This ink is very pale

Musical notations: nice,
but I am not a musicologist

I can't read this column,
and I bet it's not
transcribed anywhere

I like these three capitals; I
picked this manuscript for no
other reason

That's OK.
I am sure
it's not very
interesting
anyway.
Proof is
they did
not even
fill in the
illuminated
capital at
the top of
this column



L N L with
big nosed
faces and
tentacles

I can at least
see that it's
in provençal

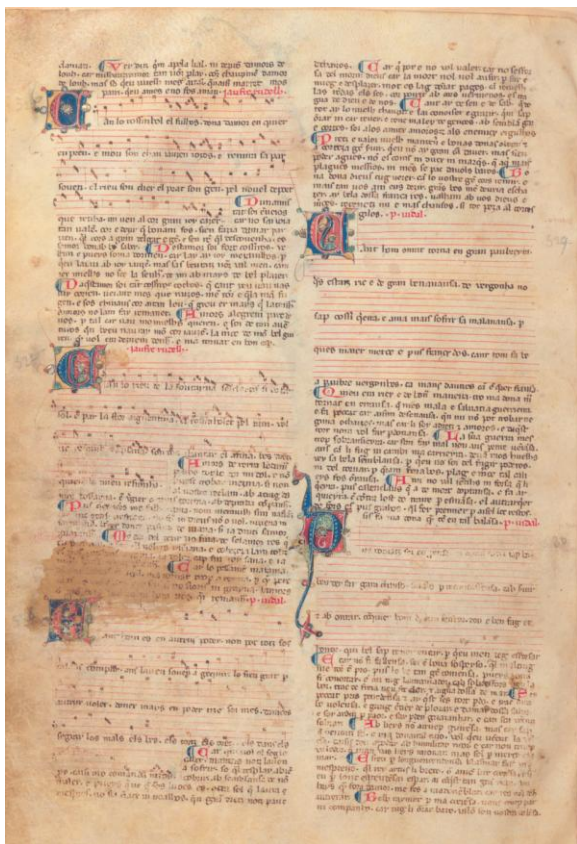
The little
balls or
spheres
indicate
something is
in motion

Must be a
kind of vida
or razo
(a long one,
so
hopefully it
isn't Jaufré
and the
countess of
Tripol's
silly story)

For the sake of
focus, I'll assume
this column is not
within the purview
of this essay. Let's
ignore it

Little machines to
produce atoms or
sounds

This is
Lanquan li
jorn son
lonc en mai.
I have
taught this
poem too
often to be
sure I still
like it



This is the verso as you probably guessed

Two more poems by
Jaufre Rudel and both
starting with a C

Again for the sake of focus and
sheer laziness this column is
declared out of the purview of
etc.

The
initials
are not
as good
as those
on the
recto

Still the
whole page
is
pleasantly
balanced

This
looks
like a
coffee
stain (I
know
they did
not drink
coffee)

Maybe an herbal
tea stain?



Moreover I
don't
know
much
about
P. Vidal

I wish this
initial was
in the other
column so
I could
include it
in my
purview



The creature has one head and two tails or tentacles. Or the lower tail may be viewed as a small peg leg. The head seems ready to shoot a black projectile through the page by way of its tongue. The tails or limbs seem on the contrary to be attracting matter from the outside. The L shaped body stands squarely like a cabin, a cabinet, a lantern, a stove, or a very primitive camera. The creature turns its back from the poem and its musical notation, running away toward the prosaic left column. Maybe it does not like this kind of music and would rather sing another song. The creature may be a musical box: if you pull the loop on the top, it cranks a mechanic air. The tentacles suck sounds from outside. The sounds agglutinate in spherical compounds, which fall into the box. Their chance collisions produce music. After a while, used spheres are expelled and replaced by fresh ones for new combinations of sounds. This imaginary device emblemizes the experimental and technological nature of courtly lyric. What sings is not a subject but a machine. There is no author, but engineers and designers. In the same fashion, there is no author to this slide, which is brought to you by electronic know how.



Although the pictemes are the same than in the preceding initial (anthropomorphic profile, tentacles, spheres, all attached to the letter shaped as a container), the general effect is quite different. The head looks less like a mask or a gargoyle, and more than the quickly sketched likeness of a man with a hawkish nose. The letter N fits the back of his head like a helmet secured by straps to his forehead and chin. His mouth is tightly closed and the sphere attached to it seems to lock it like a key or a gag. No running away: the man's head is kept in a cage like a bird. Were his lips unlocked, God knows what abuses, supplications, screams and whispers he would proffer. Courtly poetry is subjective indeed, but at a price for the subject supposed to sing, to love, and to love to sing.

a green profile
blossoms out of
the L that
sprouts buds
leaves sap and
seeds across the
page plants do
not sing though
as they silently
grow and
conquer their
space on earth
the green
man's grave



all things
morph into
each other like
soup who
could say that
a rock does not
grow a heart
and a heart
does not bear
fruits a poem
does not make
sense at some
point in time as
it produces at
once a poet
and a reader

Deceptively easy the first stanza puts the reader in her place. She does neither know how to sing, nor to compose poetry in provençal, nor to understand the reasoning at work in the poem. She is invited though to listen again and again: “*com pus lauziretz mais valra.*” The added value depends on the incapacity of the listener to occupy the place of the singer. If all could sing, compose and understand, poetry would be common speech and nobody would pay attention to it. Poets need non poets to pay attention. Poets need that non poets pay attention. Poets need non poets in order that someone pay attention. I claim the seat of the non poet non laureate.

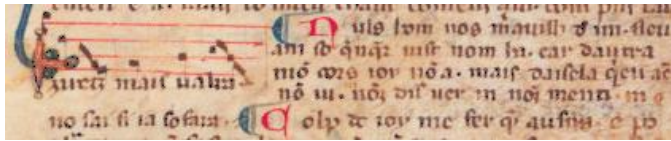


*No sap cantar quil so nom ditz. nil
vers trobar quilz motz nos fay. ni no
sap de rima cos vay. si razo non
enten e si. mais lo mieu chant
comens aisi. com pus lauziretz mais
valra.*

She does not know how to sing
who does not say a sound to me.
She does not compose a poem
who does not find the words.
She does not know the way
rhymes work if she has no
reason in her. Here is my song.
The more you listen, the best it's
worth.

Another self enclosed riddle that does not seem to have much to do with the first stanza. It is not about composing and listening, but about loving and seeing, loving someone who has never seen you and whom you have never seen. The missing side of the square is a statement about her love. I love her; I have never seen her. She has never seen me; does she love me?

*Nuls hom
no
meravilh
de mi.
sieu am
so
quenquar
vist nom
ha. car
dautra
mon cors
joy non
a. mais
daisela
quieu anc
non vi.
ni noms
dis ver ni
noms
menti. ni
no sai si
ja so
fara.*

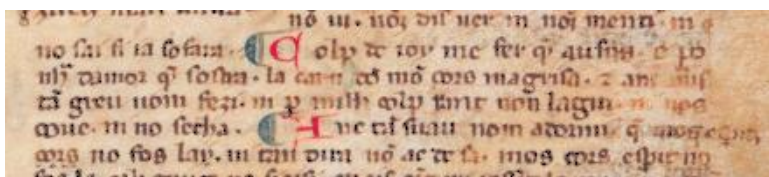


Beside being blind to me, she is also mute to me, unless there is something to say that is neither true nor false. But “me” here is him, the male poet; this present non poet listener would fit better in her shoes (if she has any). The stanza does neither say nor imply that she has never heard or read him.

May no
one
wonder
at me if I
love
who has
not yet
seen me.
For my
heart has
no joy
from any
one
except
her
whom I
never
saw. She
did not
tell me
the
truth;
she did
not lie to
me; I
don't
know if
she will
ever.

*Colp de joy me fer
quem ausira e ponha
damor quem sostra. la
carn don mon cors
magrisa. & anc mais
tan greu nom fezi ni
per nulh colp tant non
lagui ni nos mue ni no
secha.*

A stroke of joy hits me
that'll kill me and love
postponed that'll melt
my flesh and make my
body slim. Never did I
cause so much grief to
myself; never did I
waste away so much
from any blow; no
change, no relief for
me.



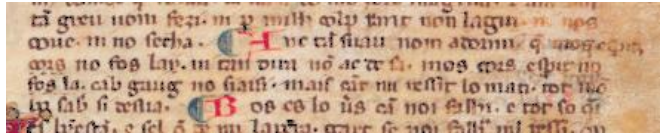
Joy hits, love is postponed, and this entails a loss of bodily matter. Should I consequently feel guilty? If this poem requests my love like a love letter, I am sorry to say I received it a few centuries too late. I can only witness the emaciated state to which love of logic and poetry can lead someone who claimed earlier to know how to sing, compose and understand a poem. “*ni nos mue ni no secha*” suspends heart, body, poet and poem in the no time zone of the manuscript page—or in the private, delightful hell of cultivated frustration.

*Anc tan suau nom adormi
que mos esperitz ~~cors~~ no
fos lay. ni tan dira nom
ac de sa. mos cors ~~espriz~~
~~no fos la. cab gaug no~~
~~siaisi. mais cant mi ressit~~
~~lo mati. tot mon bo saber~~
~~si desva.~~*

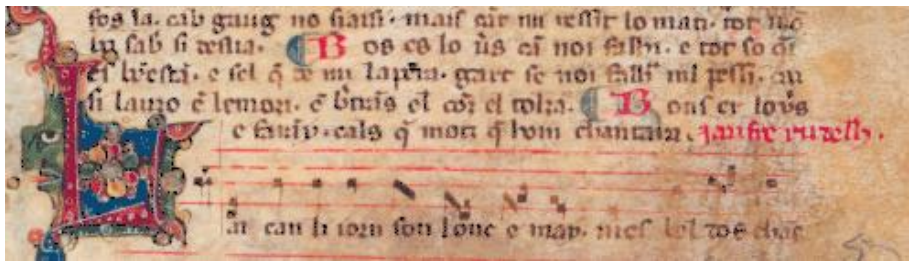
I never felt asleep so lightly, that my mind ~~heart~~ was not there. And my heart ~~mind~~ ~~was not there~~ was never so angry over here that joy did not comfort it. But when I awake in the morning, all my good knowledge is gone.

No matter how sweetly I sleep, my mind remains present and my heart is so full of anger that no joy can comfort it. But when I wake up in the morning, my true knowledge is gone.

No matter how lightly I sleep, my mind is far away, and no matter how much anger my heart contains, joy comforts it. But when I wake up in the morning, my pleasant knowledge is gone.



I have tried different interpretations of this stanza, which is plagued by double negations and ambiguities, not mentioning the corrections indicating that the scribe had a hard time making sense out of it. Depending on how one understands *suau adormi* (it can indicate a sweet sleep or a light sleep) and *bo saber* (it can indicate an agreeable delusion or a harsh truth), one ends with an ode to sleep and the soothing delusions that dreams bring to suffering lovers, or with a clinical description of sleep deprivation due to love pains, resulting into a state of hyperconsciousness that unfortunately does not last: with day light, love illusions come back. *Et si jamais ma pobre ame amoureuse Ne doit avoir de bien en vérité, Faites au moins qu'elle en ait en mensonge.* Louise Labbé, lucidly, called for the sweet lies that she knew to be unable to comfort her (but that was a few centuries later).



“*Bos*” again teases me. Is the poem good because it is true, pleasant, or beautiful? From the poet side, it is good when it is done and that everything falls into place: rhymes are rounded, stanzas are squared, and meaning will take care of itself. It is time now to pass it on, not to the unseen, unheard and unborn female reader who may fall in love with it from afar—or not, but to some guy here and now who will probably misunderstand half of it and forget the rest. Still, he will transmit it and the transmission will make the poem “good” or keep it “good” no matter the shortcomings of the performer. *In saeculi saeculorum*, singers, copyists, glossators, critics, and readers will ally to get it right while playing it wrong. Or the opposite. Poets need non poets to pay attention.

*Bos es lo vers can noi
falhi. e tot so quei es
ben esta. e sel que de
mi lapenra. gart se
noi falha nil pessi.
que si lauzo en
lemozi. e bertans el
coms el tolza. Bons
er lo vers e farany,
cals que motz que
hom chantara.*

The poem is good: I did not fail and all it contains goes well. The one who will learn it from me should keep from messing it up and butchering it, for they should hear it as it is those in Limousin, Bertrand and the count in the Toulousain. The poem will be good. There, they will make it so no matter what words will be sung.

But non poets get easily bored or distracted. They need disruptions and changes to keep interested.

I suggest that you take now a short break and go on wikipedia or youtube to listen to a little air of galoubet, the traditional provençal flute and tambourine.



If you are a poet, then you may skip the galoubet interlude

If you do not like galoubet that much, then good old ocarina and/or triangle will be a nice alternative (note that since each needs both hands to be played, they cannot be played simultaneously like the tambourine and flute of galoubet). There are numerous airs played on triangle and numerous airs played on ocarina available on the internet.

No matter what you listen to, do not forget to come back. The next poem I'll misinterpret is the famous Lanquan li jorn son lonc en mai

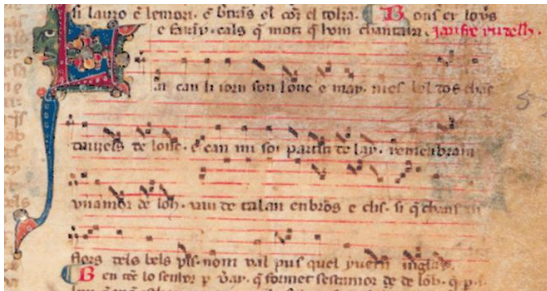
There, when the days are long in May, I enjoy
the sweet song of birds from afar; and when I
have left, I remember a love from afar; I go as
I wish stooped and downcast, and neither song
nor flower from pine trees I praise more than
icy winter.

si luno e reman. e bñs el cō el tola. **B** onas er loñs
 e knip. eals q mori q hem dñm can. *pañte mñels.*
 in can hi toñ son lone e mñ. mñ. lñ. toñ dñr
 canñels te loue. e can mñ son pañte te lñ. remñbram
 ynñmñe de loñ. un te talan enbñs e chr. n qñent en
 floñ mñe lels pñ nom nñl pur quel pñmñ mññe.
B en nñ lo fñmñe y dñr. q fñmñe fñmñmñe de te loñ. q pñ
 lñ. dññe. dññe.

of the poet's *saison mentale*. So, when days are long, in May and in *me*, the first person of this poem enters into a chronic, seasonal depression, which birdsongs trigger. The poem itself is not expected to trigger a similar

locate them “over there” and not “right here” even if “over there” is a few yards away. There is nothing depressing in that (I am currently hearing birds singing through an open window, despite the whirl of the fan, and feel grateful that there are still some birds to sing in my environment.) In the poem sadness falls on the listener when he moves away from the place where he can hear the birds (*mi soi partitz de lay*) and realizes he cannot take them with him, except in his memory. Then he remembers something else that obliterates the *hic et nunc* of a long May day and renders it equivalent to a short, cold, winter day. The first rhyme of the stanza “may” becomes equal to the last rhyme “glatz.” Now I remember that I used to remember something comparable to birdsongs and vaguely labeled *amor de lohn*, but powerful enough to substitute a memory to a perception. The substitution process is repeated as the poet composes his poem, replacing his current perceptions by the memory of a memory. In this first stanza, three moments in times and two cognitive faculties are compressed to form a

apparatus.
moment,
the enunciation
the poet
but does not
rather does not
to
perceives of
surroundings.



compact
At the first
or present of
of the poem,
remembers
perceive, or
pay attention
what he
his
We don't

know in what month of the year he is composing his poem. At the second moment, or past of the narration, the poet both perceives (the birdsongs) and remembers (the love from afar). At the third moment, or anterior past of the narration, the love from afar is a perception not yet transformed into a memory. But what sort of perception can be a “love from afar”? Our only clues are the comparison with the birdsongs and the description of the mood the memory of this love induces in the reminiscing “I.” The only defining quality of this love is that it involves a haunting separateness. Being in love from afar is like continuing to hear the birdsongs when they are no more physically audible. The lover from afar adopts the posture of people who hear voices and talk to invisible beings (without a cell-phone), shoulders hunched over their secretive relationship, oblivious of their surroundings, eyes downcast, ears deaf to anything but the voice, the song, the sound of what is not here. Where, then, does the non poet listener stand in this stanza? Afar too, but not in the same “afar” than the beloved. I am not a poet, and I am not in the mind of this poet. However, what he displays in front of me is a piece of his mind. In the same way that in *no sap cantar quil so nom ditz* he brings to the fore his nocturnal dreams—whether truthful or delusory—without revealing their content, in *lai can li jorn son lonc e may* he presents a particular interlace of perceptions and memories without providing any details that could help a non poet listener to create a fictional space of projection. Imagine what

si l'auye e' emen. e' vnito el cor el vola. **B**ous et loys
e' eusy. eals q' mora q' homi d'antana. *jaufre ruells.*
ai can li touz son loue e' map. mief tel toe d'at
angels de loue. e' can mi for paine te l'ay. remicabram
vnando de lob. au te talan enbros e' chf. si q' d'ant
flosa reis tels plu-nom val pur quel vuerri. **B**ous et loys
e' eusy. eals q' mora q' homi d'antana. *jaufre ruells.*



are not the contents but the apparatus itself. Thus the poetic commonplace “when I am sad it is winter no matter when I am sad” becomes an opportunity to ask oneself “when is when?” and “where is where?” Which will lead to the conclusion that there is no joy and no sadness elsewhere than here and now. The rest is madness. Very ordinary madness. And lack of logic. For if spring is winter, if afar is constantly present to my mind, if love means separateness, if what I want is never here, if what I want is “never here,” I might as well jump in the first well on my way to Megara.



Oops! It looks like I am losing my
manuscript in the shuffle.



Not that I don't like Jaufre Rudel. Or
courtly poetry in general.

I call Aristotle to the rescue (you know, the crazy guy in Metaphysics who does not believe in the principle of non contradiction and might as well jump into a well?) when I cannot bear any more with the implacable psycho-logic of poets: love is the most exciting thing that can happen to an embodied mind; but love is messing up your perceptive and rational faculties; therefore either you condemn your mind to dullness and boredom, or you condemn it to alternating between delusion and lucidity.

Anyway, it seems I truly lost my manuscript.

What about a drink here and now?

Tea?

Virginie Greene is Chair and Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at Harvard University, author of *Le sujet et la mort dans La Mort Artu* (Nizet, 2002); *The Medieval Author: Essays in Medieval French Literature* (Palgrave McMillan, 2006); and editor of *Le Débat sur le Roman de la Rose* (Champion, 2006), and *Thinking Through Chrétien de Troyes*, with Sarah Kay, Peggy McCracken, Sharon Kinoshita and Zrinka Stahuljak (Boydell and Brewer, 2011).